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Looking Back on a Year—and a Decade—of Change
Industry Leaders Assess the Business: Now & Tomorrow
Bestsellers, Best Books, Thoughts from Top Writers of the '80s

Publishers Weekly®

A CAHNERS/R.R. BOWKER PUBLICATION THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS MAGAZINE OF BOOK PUBLISHING JANUARY 5, 1990 $2.50

R.R. BOWKER
121 CHANLON RD
NEW PROVIDENCE NJ 07974
ATTN: PERIODICALS DEPT
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First In The 1990s

Publishers Weekly

VOLUME 236 NUMBER 25
ISSN 0000-0019

THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS MAGAZINE OF BOOK PUBLISHING

DECEMBER 22, 1989

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Going Public, Reader's Digest Reveals Earnings for First Time

As the Reader's Digest Association moves to go public, it has revealed a glimpse of its finances for the first time in its 67 years of stubbornly guarded privacy.

Books and home entertainment—which includes videocassettes, records and tapes—contributed 59% of total 1989 sales of $1.83 billion, the company said in its filing with the SEC. The segment had sales of $1.09 billion in 1989, and an operating profit of $192 million.

Condensed Books, which sold more than 21 million volumes worldwide last year, had revenues of $289.6 million, according to the *Wall Street Journal*'s report of the filing. Series books sold four million volumes and posted earnings of $66.6 million. General books, like *How to Do Just About Anything*, sold 17 million volumes for revenues of $487.4 million.

Chief executive George V. Grune earned $1,010,707 in salary and bonuses in fiscal 1989, as well as an additional bonus of $450,000 earned in 1988 and paid in 1989, and "performance shares" valued at $860,910.

'Time' Names New Books Editor

Time magazine has named Walter Isaacson, who has been identified with hard news in the World and Nation sections, as its new books editor.

As part of a reorganization of the cultural sections, the appointment allows Isaacson, a *Time* senior editor since 1984, to assume responsibility for books from Christopher Porterfield, who previously edited all back-of-the-book cultural sections and who will continue to handle general cultural coverage.

Isaacson joined *Time* in 1978 and has covered presidential campaigns as part of the magazine's Washington Bureau. He told *PW*, "I don't expect there to be any change in the magazine's book coverage. We're a news magazine and we want timely coverage of books and the book world."

Isaacson said that *Time*'s regular reviewers, senior writers R. Z. Sheppard and Paul Gray, will continue to review books for the magazine.

Isaacson is the author of two books of nonfiction, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made* (Simon & Schuster, 1988) and *Pro & Con* (Putnam, 1983).

AAP Sales Report for October

Category	% change, October*	% change, YTD
Adult hardcover	62.7	18.9
Adult paperback	21.9	16.9
Juvenile hardcover	32.1	20.2
Juvenile paperback	17.0	39.5
Univ. pr. hardcover	31.6	21.9
Univ. pr. paperback	-18.8	1.3
Bibles, etc.	8.7	9.5
Mass market paperback	-5.7	3.1
Book club	-1.4	2.5
Mail order	14.7	21.3
Sci-tech	20.9	4.4
College texts	-15.4	9.1
School texts	30.6	12.0

*Percent changes measured against same time periods, 1988.

Pathfinder Mural Defaced; Mayor Dinkins Denounces Vandals

The Pathfinder Mural Project, the six-story mural on the Pathfinder Press building in lower Manhattan, was defaced by paint bombs during the night of December 20–21. The work of artists from more than 20 countries, the project depicts an international group of radical political activists.

The attack comes in the wake of editorials in the New York *Daily News* and New York *Post* attacking the mural's depiction of left-wing leaders and the partial funding received from the New York State Council on the Arts and the Cultural Affairs Department of New York City.

New York City Mayor David Dinkins denounced the "cowardice of the anonymous perpetrators." Dinkins said the vandalism points to a "lack of respect for the diversity of opinion and creative expression that characterizes what it means to be American." He pledged to do everything possible to apprehend those responsible for the damage and promised assistance in restoring the work.

Prior to the attack, Pathfinder Press, an international publisher of radical political literature, had accused the two newspapers of advocating "government censorship" and "vigilante violence."

Petitions in support of the mural are being circulated, and a large group of individuals, artists and representatives from unions and arts organizations gathered at a rally December 16 in support of the mural and to discuss censorship and artistic freedom.

—CALVIN REID

Sterling Announces Free Freight And Several Acquisitions

In one of several developments at Sterling Publishing, the company announced it has begun offering free freight to bookstores and wholesalers as of January 1.

The freight policy, said Sterling Publishing's executive vice-president Lincoln A. Boehm, will feature a sliding scale allowing its customers to combine all orders, including new books, backlist, hardcovers and paperbacks as well as titles distributed by Sterling.

The company also announced it was acquiring the publishing rights and inventory of Main Street Press of Pittstown, N.J., and will also begin a copublishing venture with Hyperion Press of Vancouver, Canada.

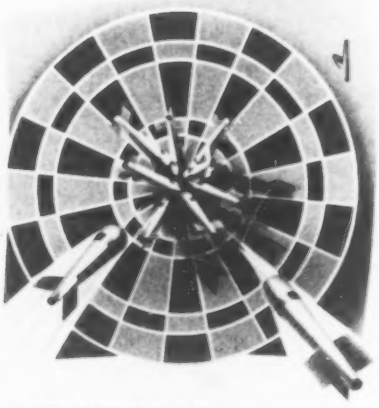
Main Street Press specializes in books on crafts, quilting and architecture. Sterling, Boehm said, would be reprinting and reissuing titles from the backlist and publishing about 17 titles under contract but not yet published.

Hyperion Press publishes children's books, nature titles and manuals. Boehm said Sterling would be taking over all existing Hyperion books and publishing them in the U.S. for the first time. The companies will also copublish future titles under the Sterling/Hyperion imprint.

In addition, Sterling has acquired the rights to 32 titles from the Workbook and Fortune-Telling series from the British firm Thorsons Publishers, but has ended its distribution of their other titles. Thorsons was recently acquired by Collins, and Harper & Row has become distributor of the titles Sterling did not buy. Sterling has also begun distribution of crafts and cake decorating titles by Merehurst Ltd. of England.

A Decade of Megasellers

It was a time of unprecedented numbers for a range of titles by name authors and on trendy themes



BY DAISY MARYLES

The term "megasellers" is an '80s word coined specifically to describe the new breed of hardcover bestsellers, those with seven-figure unit sales—numbers that in previous decades could be applied only to mass market paperbacks. Of course, there were exceptions. In the '70s, *The Living Bible* and Richard Bach's *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* sold over the two-million mark. But the latter was called a "publishing phenomenon," and the Bible, especially a new edition, often sells in huge numbers. In the '80s, 13 novels and 12 nonfiction titles went over the one-million sales mark.

What sets apart the million-copy sales of hardcovers during the '80s is not only the increased numbers of titles that achieved those lofty watersheds, but that these huge sales became the expected norm for a work of fiction by a name writer with an established track record, and also for celebrity biographies and books about popular culture. First printings, author advances and promotional and advertising budgets scaled new heights—all feeding the frenzied and often unrealistic expectations that these books would sell in mass market–like quantities. As the decade wound down, publishers began to sound more realistic and prudent, talking about lower first printings and author advances—necessary reactions after some of those titles published as megasellers behaved like mass market paperbacks in another respect: returns exceeding 30%.

Fiction High Rollers

Checking the list of works that comprise *PW*'s top 25 fiction titles, we can quickly spot the novelists who led the numbers parade. Ten of the 13 million-copy novels were by three writers—Stephen King, Danielle Steel and Tom Clancy. How strong were the sales of these three authors at the dawn of the '80s? King's first bestseller on a hardcover list was *The Dead Zone*, which, in 1979, finished in the #6 spot with sales of 175,000 copies for that year. Compare this with his 1987 performance—three books among the top 10 of the year, including *The Tommyknockers*, in first place, with one million-plus sales. Steel's sales also gained considerable pace in the '80s. Her first hardcover success was in 1981 when *Remembrances* sold over 127,000. In 1987, two of her novels placed among the top 15 for the year. Clancy's success launched—or at least paved—the way for a genre of books called techno-thrillers. His *The Hunt for Red October* was the first novel published by the Naval Institute Press, and in its 1984 publishing year took the #13 spot among fiction bestsellers with sales of 295,000. His next books, *Red Storm Rising* and *Patriot Games*, came from Putnam and sales climbed. In 1988, the year King took a brief hiatus, Clancy captured the #1 spot on an annual list with *The Cardinal of the Kremlin*.

The Top 25 of the '80s: Fiction Bestsellers

1. Clear and Present Danger. Tom Clancy (Putnam, 1989); 1,607,715
2. The Dark Half. Stephen King (Viking, 1989); 1,550,000
3. The Tommyknockers. Stephen King (Putnam, 1987); 1,429,929
4. The Mammoth Hunters. Jean M. Auel (Crown, 1985); 1,350,000
5. Daddy. Danielle Steel (Delacorte Press, 1989); 1,321,235
6. Lake Wobegon Days. Garrison Keillor (Viking, 1985) 1,300,000
7. The Cardinal of the Kremlin. Tom Clancy (Putnam, 1988); 1,287,067
8. Texas. James A. Michener (Random House, 1985): 1,176,758
9. Red Storm Rising. Tom Clancy (Putnam, 1986); 1,126,782
10. It. Stephen King (Viking, 1986); 1,115,000
11. Kaleidoscope. Danielle Steel (Delacorte Press, 1987); 1,065,355
12. Zoya. Danielle Steel (Delcorte; 1988); 1,000,319
13. Star. Danielle Steel (Delacorte; 1989); 1,000,119
14. Patriot Games. Tom Clancy (Putnam, 1987); 957,400
15. Misery. Stephen King (Viking, 1987); 875,000
***16. The Sands of Time.** Sidney Sheldon (Morrow, 1988)
17. The Talisman. Stephen King and Peter Straub (Viking, 1984); 830,000
18. Leaving Home: A Collection of Lake Wobegon Stories. Garrison Keillor (Viking, 1987); 817,000
19. The Satanic Verses. Salman Rushdie (Viking, 1989); 766,000
20. The Icarus Agenda. Robert Ludlum (Random House, 1988); 753,967
21. Poland. James A. Michener (Random House, 1984); 750,475
22. The Eyes of the Dragon. Stephen King (Viking, 1987); 750,000
23. Caribbean. James A. Michener (Random House, 1989): 749,941
24. Bonfire of the Vanities. Tom Wolfe (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1987); 739,862
25. Skeleton Crew. Stephen King (Putnam, 1985); 720,000
*Sales figures were submitted to *PW* in confidence, for use only in placing the title in its correct position on the list.

Familiar names make up the rest of the decade's bestselling novelists. Jean Auel's third novel, *The Mammoth Hunters*, was the #1 bestselling fiction novel in 1985. Auel's first novel, and first installment of the Earth's Children saga, *The Clan of the Cave Bear*, sold 119,000 copies in 1980 in its debut year. Robert Ludlum was the lead novelist in 1979 with sales for that year of about 250,000 for *The Matarese Circle*; despite a significant rise in units sold for future titles, the author never again achieved that high spot during the next 10 years. James Michener won the top fiction sales spot a couple of times during the '70s, and achieved that again in 1980 with *The Covenant*, but then #2 was the spot he took three years in a row—1982–1984. Sidney Sheldon's books were often among the top five novels of the year during the '80s.

Garrison Keillor's radio broadcasts on *A Prairie Home Companion* won him enough book fans to sell over one million copies during 1985 with *Lake Wobegon Days*. And Tom Wolfe's strong record as a bestselling nonfiction author stood him in strong stead for his first novel, *Bonfire of the Vanities*. An unlikely novel on this decade's list is Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*; its popularity during the last year is more a reflection of a political stance than an example of a commercial, popular novel.

Nonfiction Winners

A more eclectic group comprises the top 25 nonfiction titles of the '80s, but a few familiar themes run throughout. The country's obsession with health and fitness; idolization of celebrity figures, both in business and entertainment; and general money matters all figure extensively among the top 25 books. One can also see the publishing strength of mass market players in what was predominantly a hardcover game during the '70s; Bantam's five nonfiction titles and the two from Warner Books make up almost 30% of the nonfiction list.

The excessive influence of the broadcast medium and Hollywood can also be noted in the top 25 nonfiction books. *Frugal Gourmet* Jeff Smith's popularity was certainly enhanced by his ongoing PBS television series; Carl Sagan's *Cosmos* was helped by his 13-part PBS series; Lee Iacocca's TV ad spots for Chrysler raised his public visibility; as did Erma Bombeck's humorous spots on *Good Morning America*; and Bill Cosby's books were catapulted onto the national charts by his leading television sitcom.

Harper & Row scored an unexpected hit with *In Search of Excellence*, the top nonfiction bestseller of 1983. The title wasn't figured for bestsellerdom; it was published the previous year with a mere 8100-copy first printing. Another sleeper was *A Brief History of Time*; Bantam first issued the book by wheelchair-bound Cambridge physicist Stephen Hawking, who communicates via a computerized voice synthesizer (the author suffers from ALS), with a 50,000-copy first printing.

And politics, specifically the British Parliament's banning of *Spycatcher*, the memoir by the former assistant director of the British secret service, again helped the sales of a book. Americans and Britons flocked to U.S. bookstores to purchase a title available only on this side of the Atlantic.

Other Megasellers

A few books not included on our adult hardcover lists deserve special mention, particularly two children's titles with sales of over one million—Chris Van Allsburg's *The Polar Express* (Houghton Mifflin, 1,166,000) and Shel Silverstein's *The Light in the Attic* (Harper & Row, 2,015,181). Also, two hardcover movie tie-ins hit the million mark during the '80s—*E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial Storybook* by William Kotzwinkle (Putnam) and *Return of the Jedi Storybook*, adapted by Joan D. Vinge (Random).

The list does not include dictionaries, but if it had, the #1 spot would have been claimed by Merriam Webster's *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, with sales of more than 6.4 million since its release in 1983. One of the all-time bestselling hardcovers, *Better Homes & Gardens New Cook Book*, was revised heavily twice during the '80s—in '81 and '89—by Meredith. Sales of the 1981 edition passed the three-million mark during the decade. □

The Top 25 of the '80s: Nonfiction Bestsellers

1. **Iacocca: An Autobiography.** Lee Iacocca with William Novak (Bantam, 1984); 2,572,000
2. **Fatherhood.** Bill Cosby (Doubleday/Dolphin, 1986); 2,335,000
3. **The 8-Week Cholesterol Cure.** Robert E. Kowalski (Harper & Row, 1987); 2,250,000
4. **Fit for Life.** Harvey and Marilyn Diamond (Warner Books, 1985); 2,023,000
5. **In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies.** Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman Jr. (Harper & Row, 1982); 1,375,000
6. **All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten.** Robert Fulghum (Villard, 1988); 1,280,000
7. **Jane Fonda's Workout Book.** Jane Fonda (Simon & Schuster, 1981)
8. **The Frugal Gourmet.** Jeff Smith (Morrow, 1985)
9. **A Brief History of Time.** Stephen W. Hawking (Bantam Books, 1988); 1,130,000
10. **Yeager: An Autobiography.** General Chuck Yeager and Leo Janos (Bantam, 1985)
11. **Nothing Down.** Robert Allen (Simon & Schuster, 1980)
12. **Time Flies.** Bill Cosby (Doubleday/Dolphin, 1987)
13. **A Day in the Life of America.** Rick Smolan and David Cohen (Collins Publishers, 1986); 960,000
14. **Cosmos.** Carl Sagan (Random House, 1980); 887,462
15. **The Frugal Gourmet Cooks with Wine.** Jeff Smith (Morrow, 1987); 860,963
16. **The Rotation Diet.** Martin Katahn (Norton, 1986)
17. **Motherhood: The Second Oldest Profession.** Erma Bombeck (McGraw-Hill, 1983); 846,000
18. **Trump: The Art of the Deal.** Donald W. Trump with Tony Schwartz (Random House, 1987); 835,091
19. **Loving Each Other.** Leo Buscaglia (Slack/Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984); 830,587
20. **His Way: The Unauthorized Biography of Frank Sinatra.** Kitty Kelley (Bantam, 1986)
21. **Elvis and Me.** Priscilla Beaulieu Presley with Sandra Harmon (Putnam, 1985); 810,199
22. **Spycatcher: The Candid Autobiography of a Senior Intelligence Officer.** Peter Wright with Paul Greengrass (Viking, 1987); 800,000
23. **The One Minute Manager.** Spencer Johnson with Kenneth Blanchard (Morrow, 1982)
24. **Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives.** John Naisbitt (Warner Books, 1982); 762,000
25. **Talking Straight.** Lee Iacocca with Sonny Kleinfeld (Bantam Books, 1988)

* Sales figures were submitted to *PW* in confidence, for use only in placing the titles in their correct positions on the list.

Longest-Running Hardcover Bestsellers for 1989

The books on these *PW* hardcover and paperback bestseller lists are those that lasted longest on our regular weekly bestseller lists in 1989. The list of hardcover fiction and nonfiction titles does not necessarily reflect the year's bestselling hardcover books in terms of actual sales. Often titles that achieve bestsellerdom in the last few months of the year will have the highest rate of sales because of holiday purchases. The 1989 list of longest-running bestsellers include 15 fiction titles and 17 nonfiction titles. Last year, only nine nonfiction books enjoyed a run of 15 or more weeks.

FICTION

		#Wks. on '89 List	#Wks. on '88 List
1	**The Joy Luck Club.** Amy Tan. Putnam (3/89; $18.95).	35	–
2	* **The Satanic Verses.** Salman Rushdie. Viking (2/89; $19.95).	25	–
3	* **While My Pretty One Sleeps.** Mary Higgins Clark. Simon & Schuster (5/89; $19.95).	21	–
4	* **Star.** Danielle Steel. Delacorte (3/89; $19.95)	20	–
	The Temple of My Familiar. Alice Walker. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (5/89; $19.95)	20	–
	* **The Russia House.** John le Carré. Knopf (6/89; $19.95).	20	–
5	**The Cardinal of the Kremlin.** Tom Clancy. Putnam (7/88; $19.95)	19	20
	The Negotiator. Frederick Forsyth. Bantam (4/89; $19.95)	19	–
	Red Phoenix. Larry Bond. Warner (6/89; $19.95)	19	–
6	* **The Sands of Time.** Sidney Sheldon. Morrow (10/88; $19.95).	17	5
	A Prayer for Owen Meany. John Irving. Morrow (3/89; $19.95)	17	–
7	**Breathing Lessons.** Anne Tyler. Knopf (8/88; $18.95).	16	13
	Mutation. Robin Cook. Putnam (1/89; $18.95)	16	–
	* **Polar Star.** Martin Cruz Smith. Random House (7/89; $19.95)	16	–
	* **Clear and Present Danger.** Tom Clancy. Putnam (8/89; $21.95)	16	–

NONFICTION

		#Wks on '89 List	#Wks on '88 List
1	* **All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten.** Robert Fulghum. Villard Books (10/88; $15.95).	51	7
2	**A Brief History of Time.** Stephen W. Hawking. Bantam (4/88; $18.95).	49	35
3	* **Wealth Without Risk.** Charles Givens. Simon & Schuster (12/88; $19.95).	48	–
4	**The 8-Week Cholesterol Cure, Revised Edition.** Robert Kowalski. Harper & Row (3/87; $19.95).	34	49
5	**The T-Factor Diet.** Martin Katahn. Norton (4/89; $18.95).	29	–
6	* **It's Always Something.** Gilda Radner. Simon & Schuster (6/89; $17.95).	22	–
7	**The Way Things Work.** David Macaulay. Houghton Mifflin (10/88; $24.95).	21	4
	* **A Woman Named Jackie.** C. David Heymann. Lyle Stuart Book/Carol Publishing Group (5/89; $21.95)	21	–
8	**Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun.** Wess Roberts. Warner (3/89; $16.95).	17	–
9	**Peace, Love and Healing.** Bernie S. Siegel. Harper & Row (6/89; $18.95).	16	–
	The Good Times. Russell Baker. Morrow (6/89; $19.95)	16	–
	Love and Marriage. Bill Cosby. Doubleday (4/89; $16.95)	16	–
	* **Blind Faith.** Joe McGinniss. Putnam (1/89; $19.95)	16	–
10	* **Gracie: A Love Story.** George Burns. Putnam (11/88; $16.95).	15	5
—	**The Summer of '49.** David Halberstam. Morrow (5/89; $21.95)	15	–
	It Was on Fire When I Lay Down on It. Robert Fulghum. Villard Books (9/89; $17.95)	15	–
	Among Schoolchildren. Tracy Kidder. Houghton Mifflin (9/89; $19.95)	15	–

* These titles achieved the #1 spot during their 1989 presence on *PW*'s Bestseller List.

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Longest-Running Paperback Bestsellers for 1989

As in previous years reprints of hardcover bestsellers dominated the mass market list, while humor continued to be the most popular category on the trade list. This year also welcomed many more quality works of fiction on the trade side. Fewer mass market and trade paper titles made the longest running list this year—19 compared to 25 in 1988 and 20 compared with 21 for the same year. *The Road Less Traveled* makes its sixth appearance on these lists.

MASS MARKET

		#Wks. on '89 List	#Wks. on '88 List
1	* **The Shell Seekers.** Rosamunde Pilcher. Dell (2/89; $4.95).	43	–
2	* **The Bonfire of the Vanities.** Tom Wolfe. Bantam (11/88; $5.95).	26	4
3	* **Cardinal of the Kremlin.** Tom Clancy. Berkley (8/89; $5.95).	18	–
4	**The Silence of the Lambs.** Thomas Harris. St. Martin's Press (5/89; $5.95).	16	–
5	**Bitter Blood.** Jerry Bledsoe. NAL/Onyx (4/89; $4.95).	14	–
6	* **The Icarus Agenda.** Robert Ludlum. Bantam (8/89; $5.95).	13	–
	* **Trevayne.** Robert Ludlum. Bantam (8/89; $5.95).	13	–
7	* **Zoya.** Danielle Steel. Dell (7/89; $5.95).	12	–
	She Who Remembers. Linda L. Shuler. NAL/Signet (8/89; $4.95).	12	–
	* **Breathing Lessons.** Anne Tyler. Berkley (10/89; $5.50).	12	–
8	* **Lonesome Dove.** Larry McMurtry. Pocket Books (2/89; $4.95).	11	13
	Swim with the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive. Harvey Mackay. Ivy Books (3/89; $4.95).	11	–
	Doctors. Erich Segal. Bantam (8/89; $5.95).	11	–
9	* **Trump: The Art of the Deal.** Donald Trump and Tony Schwartz. Warner Books (1/89; $5.95).	10	–
	** **The Accidental Tourist.** Anne Tyler. Berkley (1/89; $4.95).	10	–
	Inheritance. Judith Michael. Pocket Books (2/89; $5.50).	10	–
	* **Gates of Paradise.** V. C. Andrews. Pocket Books (6/89; $5.50).	10	–
	Till We Meet Again. Judith Krantz. Bantam (6/89; $5.95).	10	–
	Senatorial Privilege: The Chappaquidick Cover-Up. Leo Damore. Dell (7/89; $4.95).	10	–

TRADE

		#Wks on '89 List	#Wks on '88 List
1	* **Codependent No More.** Melody Beattie. H & R/Hazelden (5/87; $8.95).	49	36
2	**The Road Less Traveled.** M. Scott Peck. Touchstone/S & S (1983; $9.95).	43	50
3	* **Yukon Ho!** Bill Watterson. Andrews & McMeel (4/89; $6.95).	35	–
4	**Love in the Time of Cholera.** Gabriel García Márquez. Penguin (4/89; $8.95).	29	–
5	* **Love, Medicine & Miracles.** Bernie S. Siegel. H & R/Perennial (6/88: $8.95).	23	27
	* **The Dark Tower II: The Drawing of the Three.** Stephen King. NAL/Plume (3/89; $12.95).	23	–
	Beyond Codependency and Getting Better All the Time. Melody Beattie. H & R/Hazelden (5/89; $9.95).	23	–
6	* **The Essential Calvin & Hobbes.** Bill Watterson. Andrews & McMeel (10/88; $12.95).	18	–
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14	**Garfield Chews the Fat.** Jim Davis. Ballantine (3/89; $6.95).	10	–

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